

REV. DR. HICKOK'S SERMON

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR
FOREIGN MISSIONS,

PREACHED AT PITTSFIELD, MASS.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1866.

The Complete Idea of the World's Conversion to Jesus Christ.

A

S E R M O N ,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

MEETING IN PITTSFIELD, MASS.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1866.

BY

LAURENS P. HICKOK, D.D.

President of Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.

B O S T O N :

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AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

PITTSFIELD, MASS., OCTOBER, 1866.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be presented to the Rev. Dr. HICKOK, for his Sermon preached on Tuesday evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Attest,

JOHN O. MEANS, *Rec. Secretary.*

S E R M O N .

PHILIPPIANS ii. 10, 11.

THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, OF THINGS IN HEAVEN, AND THINGS ON EARTH, AND THINGS UNDER THE EARTH; AND THAT EVERY TONGUE SHOULD CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.

THE conversion of the world of mankind to a godly life is exclusively a Christian idea. Avarice may dream of possessing the wealth of the world, ambition may covet the power of the world, poetry and philosophy may fondly talk of a golden age, but that this world of sinners shall one day become completely holy, is the grand idea no where found save in the revealed Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ideas govern the world. Armies and navies are begotten of ideas, and they are used for nothing else than that they may make these ideas to become realities. And the power of ideas in controlling the church is quite as conspicuous as in governing the world. The church never rises above, and never goes beyond her idea of Christian life and duty, either in her experimental piety, or in her missionary zeal and effort. The idea once fully reached and the impulse is exhausted, and all further exertion ceases.

The text contains the general Gospel idea of the world's conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this even more comprehensive than our world, for it includes "things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth," and thereby affirms of angels, men and devils, that either by constraint or willingly, they shall all bow to the mediatorial sovereignty of Jesus Christ. So far, however, as this is to inspire our work, the idea will be comprehensively attained, and its missionary impulse exhausted, when all the dwellers upon our globe shall have been turned to the Lord. But the general idea is given in a peculiar form, enabling us to determine what is the essential completeness of this conversion itself. This is of deeper interest than any question of its comprehensiveness, since our satisfaction in the numbers converted must be found in the excellency and completeness of the conversion effected. When all are converted to the Lord, or so fast as any are converted, we need to know more especially what this conversion is when carried out to its full measure. This may be found from the text selected, more directly than perhaps from any other passage of Scripture.

The great importance of apprehending this Christian idea in all its completeness is, as we have said, because no one rises above, nor goes beyond, his completed idea. The man who has equaled his full thought of the Christian life in his own experience, will make no further effort for higher attainments, nor will he urge others to any greater measures of growing sanctification. Our missionaries who go out to the heathen, and we who at home support them by our contributions and our prayers, have each of us some idea of what these heathen are to become when converted to Chris-

tianity; and neither our missionaries nor we ourselves will labor or pray to get our converted heathen conformed to any other standard than our own complete idea of Christian faith and practice.

Permitted, then, as we are by a kind Providence, to convene so auspiciously on another Anniversary of our American Board of Missions, we may perhaps most profitably open our meeting by the important inquiry—What is the full import of the inspired declaration, “that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?” This will be equivalent to the question—WHAT IS THE INSPIRED IDEA OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ITS FULL MEASURE?

An old Rabbinical legend represents heaven as divided into seven concentric spheres. In the first, or nearest to the earth, are the souls least sanctified. Rising thence in ascent, as in sanctification, to the highest, in this, the seventh sphere, the perfected for ever dwell amid the unclouded glories of Jehovah. All are accepted of God in every sphere, and the lowest may hereafter rise to the highest, but their appropriate spheres are determined by the specific amount of holiness attained. And here, perhaps, we might assume different degrees in sanctification, and plausibly illustrate their distinction, up to this perfect number of seven separate grades of holiness; but I shall have accomplished my present purpose, if I can secure your recognition of *three* pretty definitely marked phases of Christian character and experience. The last only is the Gospel idea of the Christian life in its completeness, for the realization of which none of us should cease to labor and pray, till it shall have obtained universal prevalence in the world.

I. That form of Christian life which manifests itself mainly in kindness.

Kindness, as the name imports, is a regard for the welfare of our kind. It may sometimes be known as humanity—an interest in human beings; or philanthropy—a love to man; or benevolence—a wishing well to our race; but by whatever name it may be known, we now fix our attention upon the thing itself, and attain a definite apprehension of what the Christian life is, when controlled mainly by the law of kindness.

Human experience has its frequent periods of joy and gladness. Ordinarily, life passes through many scenes brightened by plenty and prosperity, and sweetened with peace and social harmony. And yet, in our fallen world, it passes also through frequent seasons of sadness and sorrow. If not literally sighing and weeping, yet is a large portion of our experience darkened by disappointments and bereavements, wants and cares, so that often the shadows exceed the sunshine, and multitudes of every generation travel on perpetually through “a vale of tears.”

Christian kindness will manifest its ready sympathy with both of these forms of human experience. It will gladden at the view of human happiness, and sadden at the sight of human wretchedness. It rejoices with the joyous, and weeps with the weeping. It identifies itself with others, and so lives in their life that it will forget its own griefs in their joy, and refuse to taste its own abundance while it knows of another that is pining in want. And yet this Christian kindness will not exhaust itself in mere sympathetic emotion, however sincere and deep. It is eminently practical, and prompts to instant and untiring activity.

It stretches forth the hand of charity; it quickens the feet on their errands of mercy; and loosens the tongue to give utterance to its messages of tenderness and counsels of love. It stimulates exertion, so far as may be, to rescue the miserable, to relieve the suffering, to defend the injured, and to protect the weak.

The monuments of Christian kindness stand thick in all Gospel lands. It has built and endowed hospitals and asylums, retreats and houses of refuge, and made public provision for the poor, the helpless sick, the deaf and blind, the insane and unfortunate of all classes. It has associated individual activity into combined exertion to aid in all benevolent supplies of bodily need, and is more especially Christian in widely meeting the spiritual wants and removing the moral maladies and woes of mankind. Perhaps Christian charity was never so active as now, and never pushing on its plans so systematically and comprehensively, to reach and remove all forms of human ill that come within the scope of human help.

But let us carefully attain a fair and clear estimate of the intrinsic excellency of this Christian kindness. What amount of genuine Scripture holiness, or hearty devotion to God, does it include? It is here assumed that it has its source in real Christianity, and that it is the exhibition of true experimental piety. A Mohammedan may possess and cultivate great constitutional kindness; an infidel may give exhibitions of much philanthropy. All this may come from the sympathies and native sensibilities of our common humanity. But the kindness we here speak of, we suppose to be the grace of a new heart, and the fruit of Gospel regeneration. It loves man because man is the creature of God, and the subject of divine redemption. It expects to

make man happy only by making him Christian. All these public monuments of benevolence belong exclusively to Christian and not to pagan nations. And yet, Christian as it is, how highly shall we estimate its holiness? Where is the real force of the disposition and feeling directed and exhausted? Evidently the most of it is absorbed in the merely human interest. The great evil felt is human suffering, and the great good sought is deliverance from suffering. The motives applied and the appeals made are mainly to human sympathy. The saddest story of human woe, the most touching tale of distress, is spontaneously assumed and practically found to be the most effective means to rouse the public mind, and move the church to afford the desired help.

It is the same in our plans of associated benevolence. The cause of temperance is to be promoted by prayer and preaching truth, and yet, when thus made a Christian cause, the prayer is made fervid, and the truths are derived, very much from the miseries of the drunkard, and the suffering and wretchedness of his family and the community from his intemperate habit.

The abolition of slavery, though God's overruling hand has abolished it, with us, in a more terrible and summary manner, was all along steadily and strongly urged from considerations of its inhumanity, and the hope of success was made very much to turn upon vivid exhibitions of its injuries and cruelties. Our cause of Foreign Missions has taken deep and strong hold upon the Christian community, and yet this most sublime and most sacred Christian work is very commonly argued from the facts of heathen wretchedness and inhuman torture. We are made to shiver with horror at the terrible details of child-murder, the hook-swinging, the suttee-burning, and the miserable victims of

superstition crushed beneath the car of their bloody gods. Yea, even the salvation of immortal souls, both at home and among the heathen, is pressed as a matter for Christian prayer and labor, very much from considerations of human kindness only. Their misery in hell, and their happiness in heaven, are the great motives of appeal from Christian pulpits to Christian congregations.

The prominent evil is human misery; the great burden is human suffering from human cruelty and wrong,—“Man’s inhumanity to man.” The grand consummation of Christian effort is human relief from human woe. Charity and prayer, the church and the Bible, are for man’s happiness only, and even the Holy Ghost and the Saviour are needed, and are only to be valued, as means to exclude man’s misery and minister to man’s wants. Humanity is thus put as the ultimate end, and measure, and even God and heaven come to be estimated for man’s sake. If man may be relieved from suffering in this world and the next, the Christian’s prayer is answered and his religion satisfied. There is much that seems to say, ‘All that I value a crucified Saviour and the Divine Comforter for is, they are seen to be necessary to redeem man from wretchedness and secure that he shall be happy.’ Here is Christianity exhibiting itself controllingly in the form of kindness. It cheerfully makes great sacrifices, and undertakes the most self-denying enterprises, for human relief and human happiness.

Suppose, then, this religion of Christian kindness to be universally diffused through the nations. Every people, and every person amid all peoples, lives and loves in cordial Christian brotherhood. How great the change over the whole surface of our planet! War

has ceased ; the oppressor has thrown his broken rod away. And yet is this the complete idea of the world's conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ ? Is the full import of the bowing knees, and the confessing tongues, to Him who is Lord of all, here brought out ? Much as every Christian heart will rejoice to anticipate such a good time coming in our world, yet will not the enlightened and highly sanctified Christian hope and expectation be in this completely satisfied. He cannot, as a Christian, have habitually and intelligently prayed, " Thy kingdom come," and then look round and say, In this, thy kingdom, Lord, has fully come. If this is truly Christian attainment and experience, and herein is heaven begun below, yet surely must we say, that this is heaven only in its lowest sphere.

II. We advance in the completeness of the idea, *when we contemplate Christian activity in the exhibition of deep love to the Redeemer.*

A thoroughly convicted sinner, bowed down under his burden of guilt, crying out in the bitterness of his anxious spirit, " What must I do to be saved ? " may graciously receive such a view of a suffering Saviour as shall immediately melt his soul in confiding submission and love. To such a soul, at once there appears a beauty and a preciousness in the newly-found Saviour, which his heart will want words to express. Every utterance of his lips will be joy and praise. His feelings may seem enthusiastic, and his joy extravagant, to such as have known nothing of his deep experience. He makes use of the most expressive Scripture language, and the words of the most impassioned poetry, to speak out his gratitude and love to Jesus. Christ is to him " the chiefest among ten thousand," and " the

one altogether lovely ; ” none in Heaven but Him, and none on earth to be compared with Him. His life is a perpetual hymn of joy and praise. He testifies, in words none too strong for his emotions, that—

“ When Christ revealed his gracious name,
And changed my mournful state,
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
The joy appeared so great.”

His own praises are too poor to requite the wondrous grace, and he would have all others join in grateful thanksgiving. He wants all nature to conspire in his enraptured song.

“ Oh ! for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues,
The Saviour’s praises speak.”

He lives on, thus, in faith and prayer, and while his emotions become more chastened, his love to his Redeemer grows deeper, and the joy in his salvation is the more abundant from day to day. The love of Christ constrains him to live, not henceforth unto himself, but unto Him who died for him and rose again. The heathen convert to Christ participates in all this admiring gratitude and praise.

And now, in this experience, the principle in conversion works much deeper than the law of Christian kindness. The sanctifying elements come out more distinctly, and control the life more strongly and more completely. There is as much Christian kindness as in the case of one under the former division. He feels and manifests as deep an interest in the happiness of his fellow-men as the other. He enters into every plan of benevolence with as warm a zeal ; he hates as

intensely all cruelty and oppression ; he gives and prays as abundantly for the heathen ; he labors as painfully to pluck sinners as brands from the burning. But all this is manifestly, now, not so much for man's sake. The whole Christian activity is from a far more penetrating and all-pervading love to the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have the miserable to be happy ; the oppressed to go out free ; the ignorant to be enlightened ; the guilty and condemned to be pardoned and saved ; but all this is with him for Christ's sake, and in Christ's name, to the praise of his grace, and that it may magnify his redeeming love and mercy. His Saviour has done so much for him and for a lost world, and his gratitude is so full and deep for this, that he cannot permit anything to come in competition with it. If every human woe were relieved, and every wrong redressed, and every sinner pardoned, this could not fill his desire, till he should see his Saviour have all the praise. Palms and harps and crowns of immortal glory, they are nothing to him except as every palm-branch waves, and every harp is struck, and every crown is cast down, to the honor of Him whom, in his love, he crowns Lord of all.

But we have here a careful, though a very decided discrimination to be made. Supreme love to Jesus Christ should be consistent with supreme love to the triune Jehovah, and thus stand in connection with that which gives Christian completeness ; but it may often be in such a form as shall make the Christian life and spirit quite defective. In what aspect is the Saviour viewed, on which side of the Redeemer's face does the light shine, that he is so admired and loved ? If the constituted Mediator is regarded mainly in man's interest and on man's behalf, while there may be so

much devotion to God as shall evince a genuine Christian conversion, still this Christian experience will come short of the fullness, and stand quite back from the completeness of the great Gospel idea.

There is a view in which Christ is supreme. The sinner can look to nothing else. Hope and help can come to lost man from no other quarter. Man's morality, his legal obedience, his ritual observances and mortifying penances are utterly worthless. To expiate guilt and take the curse of the broken law away, nothing but Christ and him crucified can have any possible validity. God can pardon and justify for Christ's sake, but from no other consideration. Christ is "*all in all*" in man's salvation. But there is another view in which Christ and his mediation are subordinate, and a view which is important both for man and God. Here, he is means and not end; an instrument whose value is only in the use made of it. The incarnation, and the entire redemptive work, form only the scaffolding by which to erect a glorious spiritual temple; and when that temple shall be completed, the scaffolding shall be taken down. "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God [the triune Jehovah] may be *all in all*." 1 Cor. xv. 28. Here, Christ as Saviour, and man as saved, are all made to minister to the higher end of the divine honor and glory.

Now the form of Christian life and action, as considered under this second division of discourse, takes Christ and his great work of Redemption mainly in the interest of humanity. It loves him more in view of what he has done for man than in view of what he has done for God. It is the deep emotional view, as coming out in our revival scenes, and communion seasons, and in

what is esteemed to be, and very probably is, the highest religious experience and spiritual attainment of the greater portion of the active Christianity of the present day. It is sincere and ardent love to Jesus, and calls out for him and his cause great and willing self-sacrifices; but the Jesus that is so loved and served is seen as weeping, bleeding, dying, and interceding for lost and ruined man. The Saviour in whose praise the heart is so warm, is Christ in his pity—his travail of soul for the perishing. This form of piety is thus higher than Christian kindness, but it is still love and gratitude for Jesus' kindness shown to sinners. It preaches Christ as the great orthodox central truth of the Gospel scheme, but it is mainly Christ as *all in all* for the sinner's salvation. It bows the knee, and confesses that Christ is Lord; but this is more in the gratulation of man delivered than "to the glory of God the Father."

Were there then such a Christian life brought out, and such a spirit of love and praise to Jesus spread over all the earth, it would doubtless fit for a higher heaven than the life of Christian kindness, but the praise is still mainly to the Saviour, as he brings "peace on earth and good-will to men," rather than the full chorus of the upper heaven, which keeps first in the song, "Glory to God in the highest."

III. *The complete idea comes out fully, in reverent and child-like communion with the Holy God as our Heavenly Father.*

A true conception of God, adequately apprehending his holiness, glory, and majesty, must necessarily awaken great fear and awe. All intelligences must stand in his presence in uncovered homage. Here angels bow, and reverently veil their faces. Cherubim

and Seraphim cry continually, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty ; heaven and earth are full of thy glory. No mortal can stand before him without feeling the force of the direction to Moses before the burning bush : “ Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

To every wicked man, the conscious approach to such a presence must be terrible. It is this which makes the view of present death so dreadful to the sinner. He then wakes from his long, delusive dream, to find this holy God directly before him. To all the guilty, “ God is a consuming fire ;” and even to a good man, standing in his own name, such a meeting with God is awful. So terrible was the sight that Moses said, “ I exceedingly fear and quake.” An unsinning angel may appear with covered face before him, but sinful man must ever, as at the first transgression, hide from his presence.

And yet this very God, in his holiness, has also of his own mercy provided a way wherein sinners may come to him, and commune with him, and feel no tormenting fear. When we look to him through his own constituted Mediator, who has taken our nature and borne our sorrows, the terror of his presence is softened to paternal benignity, and our feeling becomes that of filial reverence. Distressing dismay subsides into child-like respect and adoring love. The redeemed sinner can now stand beneath that blazing eye which searcheth his deepest secret, and bow before Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean ; and yet here, under the shield of his accepted Redeemer, he loves to abide, and joyfully worships in the very holy of holies. With all his holiness and dread authority, the penitent soul has now learned also his Fatherly compassion and grace, and is not afraid to stand before him.

These emotions of filial reverence and love, in communion with God, can be realized by us, sinners, only as we stand reconciled and accepted in the merits of our Mediator, but they do come in the hallowed hours of our intimate communion with our heavenly Father, and they are the most sublimely elevating and soul-satisfying emotions the immortal mind can experience. The soul of man never rises to the height of its dignity and bliss, till it can stand thus in glad and intimate communion with God. Not in seeking and giving human happiness, not even in praising Christ for his pity to man, do we attain our highest elevation; but worshipping delighted amid all this majesty and glory, and led here by the hand of our accepted Redeemer—precisely in this is the fullness of the Christian life brought out. These adoring frames of mind, and humble and sweet communings in his love and grace, sometimes vouchsafed to pious saints on earth, give to them the richest foretaste of the blessedness they are to inherit, when they shall dwell with God in the highest heaven.

Most surely, as they stand here in glad communion with the Father, and with their hand in the hand of the Son as Mediator, they will love and thank the Saviour as deeply as when dwelling upon his compassion and sympathy for lost men. They will lose nothing of their tenderness and gratitude towards Jesus Christ, only they do not here look so exclusively upon the human side of his mediation. They are far more adequately taking into view the great work of redemption, and contemplating it much as Jesus did when he undertook and finished it. Not man only, nor man most, in his wretchedness and ruin, but God in his authority and majesty, God in his holiness and purity, so bright that all else pales and fades beneath it; and yet God, this

awful God, made ours by his own plan of redemption, which Jesus has executed. The dreadful majesty has become not merely tolerable to us, so that we can look upon the glory, and live, but it has become most intensely delightful to us, so that, with the seraphim, we burn with love while we adore. No where else is the glory so awful, and hence no where else is Christ so needful. Nothing so elevates man, and hence nothing so magnifies the Saviour's worth, as this communion of the reclaimed sinner with the forgiving Father, through the atoning Redeemer. Here will be kindness to man, and thanks to Christ for man's sake, but beyond all this, the glories of the Godhead appear. Mercy rejoices against judgment, while yet justice and judgment continue to be "the habitation of his throne." God remains just, while he yet justifies the believer. The fullness of the Father's heart, in its justice and its mercy, stands disclosed, and in the lasting communion our souls are "filled with all the fullness of God."

When all the tribes of men on earth shall have been thus converted, and confess Christ "*to the glory of God the Father*," then will the Gospel idea of the world's salvation be attained in its consummated reality. The great voices in heaven will then say, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Henceforth the redeemed will sing the eternal anthem, Alleluia to God and the Lamb.

In closing, we will directly apply the conclusion now attained to our great missionary work.

Comprehensively, this work is to "preach the Gospel to every creature." The completeness of the idea is in bringing back all these aliens to near communion with

God. Heathen society is everywhere wretched in its unkindness. Selfishness reigns unbroken. They live "in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But the pagan nations are still more miserable, in that they are without God, and have no hope in the world. They have no conception of a Deity with whom it may be possible that man should hold joyful communion. Their gods are capricious and fickle, lavishing gifts in their fondness upon their favorites, which stimulates them to only a selfish and mercenary devotion, and wreaking vengeance in their wrath in such a bloody way as only to excite horror and hatred. There is no blending of majesty and mercy, no tempering the divine character with dignity and amenity, which may at once inspire reverence and love. The god and the man cannot meet peacefully together. The god will despise the man, and the man will condemn the god. No pagan devotee ever worships a deity in whom he sees mercy and truth meeting together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other.

But what paganism never apprehends, the Bible everywhere discloses. In the Christian economy, justice and grace ever meet, and support each other. Authority is sustained, while benignity prevails. With all his terrible majesty on the smoking mountain, amid the thunderings and lightning, still the divine Lawgiver proclaims himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." At the awful day of the last judgment, when he comes in clouds, with all his holy angels, there is still the softening of the scene in the expiatory mark of the spear; and we look on him "whom they have pierced." The mixed majesty and mercy perpetually strike the sinner's attention, and win him to intimate and joyous communion. The human heart is here hit

by the flash of combined severity and tenderness, as was denying Peter by the look of his Master, and in heathen and Christian lands alike, penitence goes away alone and weeps bitterly.

Philosophy analyzes, and accurately discriminates the elements in these Christian experiences, but the practical metaphysician takes the facts which are the fruit of the speculation, and simply and directly uses them to bring back lost humanity into communion with propitiated Deity. There must be apprehended the severity tempered by placability. The sinner is not made alive by the Gospel, till first he has been slain by the Law. Compassion will not effectually "persuade men," except as they also know "the terrors of the Lord."

Wherever this rational, as truly as evangelical way of return to God is kept in obscurity, or held in incompleteness, there will be, on any portion of the great field of benevolent labor, pagan or Christian, a large amount of religious effort utterly wasted. Much of that which is called powerful preaching, revival preaching, ardent missionary zeal, very soon exhausts all its efficiency. When the appeals are to the hope of human happiness mainly, or fear of coming misery, or melting exhibitions of Jesus' sympathy with suffering humanity, there may be a quick interest excited, the freshness and force of which soon passes off, and the themes become idle and empty as the tales of the nursery. Even the sacred story of the Saviour's dying love may be told with such an application that the power of the cross shall be made weakness. When put in the light merely of relief from wretchedness, or attainment of happiness, whether here or hereafter, the great transactions of Calvary will quickly wear out as motives to action. To him who closely reads human nature, there will be no

mystery, under such influence, that so much apparent "goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew." He will not wonder that the sensational preachers and sentimental hearers so soon get tired of each other.

But on the other hand, that kind of dealing with fallen man, in any clime, which takes him into the presence of the heart-searching God, and obliges him to see the necessity of meeting and gaining preparation for communing with him—such preaching and dealing with the sinner never loses its power. It penetrates to the deepest fountains of the soul, and such motives never wear out. To these appeals, the ear of saint and sinner ever opens, and the convicted man is forced to cry out, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" We shall make the most Christians, at home and abroad, we shall make the best Christians, when we constrain the most directly to the inquiry, How shall I appear before God? and when we bring the soul at length into the most intimate communion with God.

The nations of the earth wait for the day of universal peace, and all the families of mankind need to be brought together in love and kindness. Commercial intercourse will not effect this. Literature, philosophy, political diplomacy, will never kindle and diffuse Christian philanthropy. The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, bringing into love to and communion with God, will alone bring men truly to love one another. The greater contains the less, and communion with God holds within it also

fellowship with man. We are to value communion with God not as the means to get the further end that man should be kind to man, but because godly communion is itself the highest grace in its own excellency, and includes and sustains within itself, love to man, and all lower graces. It is the great end of Christian conversion itself, and the consummation of the Christian life, that the sinning soul has been brought to dwell in peace with God. We shall have finished our missionary work, and prepared the heathen for all other good, and brought humanity to its highest excellency, when we shall have brought the feeling of the Psalmist to be universal, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

And now, brethren, this same thing, so important for the heathen world, is equally important for us in laboring for their salvation. As co-workers with God for a dying world, our first need is, that we come close to him, and keep in habitual communion with him. We shall so be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory," and our love and devotion to him will grow deeper and purer from year to year. This communion with the Father will be through the Son, but in the mediation of the Son we shall read the very heart of the Father. All that the Son suffered and does for a lost world, is but fulfilling the plan and executing the will of the Father. Distinction of office and execution in the redemption-work, makes no distinction in design and disposition. "Here the whole Deity is known;" "the justice and the grace" have equal glory; and the justice and the grace have no distribution, in property or degree, among the persons of the Godhead. Our

communion here is with God in his unity, and the fellowship is *equally* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. In giving our hearts to God, we receive in return a Father's embrace, an elder Brother's welcome, and the in-dwelling Spirit of perpetual consolation.

Here, too, we get our true and deep sympathy for the heathen. We shall pity their personal debasement, their social degradation, and most of all shall we pity their alienation from God. All other woes are as nothing compared with the absolute desolation of living without God. The same impulse will then move us towards them as that which sent the Saviour to our lost world. "Lo, I come." "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Communion in God's will is our best preparation for all missionary service. Nothing else can make us so strong to carry help to the lost nations and tribes of men. When discouragements and disasters and delays press upon us, nothing else can keep us so hopeful, so enduring, so persevering. Amid all sorts of hindrances, this will make us patient, courageous, and at length triumphant. In every difficulty and trial we have but to say,

"Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee,"

and we shall go on refreshed and unfaltering. Near to God ourselves, we shall not fail nor grow weary in bringing others to him. We shall expect and choose not to rest, till we reach the heavenly communion.

Out of this fallen world, God has revealed to us that he will gather a redeemed world of his own. He will "purify unto himself a peculiar people." In all ages he has had a seed to serve him, and the promised age is

coming when all shall know the Lord. Our part, brethren, in the good work, will soon cease. But all are one in Christ Jesus, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," and those who go up to their communion with God, face to face, will have their places here filled with other workers, growing more zealous, more successful. The spiritual temple shall gather its living stones from every land, and grow up to its finished consummation. The voices of all the holy in heaven and earth shall shout the top-stone to its place, crying, "Grace, grace, unto it." "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

